A GUIDE TO WEB AND ACCESSIBILITY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA
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ELECTRONIC AND INFORMATION ACCESSIBILITY

The University of Florida is committed to providing everyone a welcoming and accessible campus. UF strives to ensure individuals with disabilities enjoy reasonable access to services and resources required by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and other applicable federal and state regulations. Please take a moment and review the important information at accessibility.ufl.edu and Go Gators!


There are three levels of compliance:

A - must support
AA - should support
AAA - optional support

At a minimum, all UF websites should maintain Level AA compliance.

This guide will serve as a general accessibility resource for stakeholders in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, as well as a resource for using the Wordpress theme designed to ensure accessibility among the College’s websites.
WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Accessibility for those with visual or other impairments. People using assistive technologies such as screen readers will struggle with websites that are not set up to work well with those technologies.

Appeal to a modern audience. Many users are now looking at websites on their mobile devices and expect a responsive and intuitive experience.

Clarity of information. The web is simply not like print, and content cannot be delivered as though in print.
AUTHORING FOR ACCESSIBILITY

Whether you’re authoring web content in Wordpress, HTML, or rich-text editing platforms, it’s essential to write, style, and code your content, whether directly or indirectly through a What-You-See-Is-What-You-Get (WYSIWIG) editor, to improve its readability and clarity for all readers, including those with visual impairments.

PRINCIPLES

1. **Webpages are short and to the point.** With rare exception, web content should be limited to 300-500 words for informational content and 1200-1600 words for narrative content. Web content should be broken up into digestible chunks rather than long passages. Speaking of...

2. **Webpages have structure.** Although we don’t recommend posting super long content (see bullet #1), the content, especially for informational pages, should have a recognizable outline. The name of the website is the main header, the name of the article is the second header, the name of the sections of the article are the third-level headers, and each section contains bullets of information.

3. **Websites are circular.** Imagine a warehouse filled with crates arranged in long aisles. You have to use a map to find what you’re looking for. Now imagine your living room. You can immediately see everything in the room — at least the furniture. Websites should use intuitive navigation schemes and clear relevance of content to facilitate their use, rather than organizing content down a linear path and forcing a user to follow multiple links to get there. A good way to assess the warehouse-ness of any given website is look at the number of forward-slashes in any of its pages’ URLs. A website with most of its pages located at site.com/information/here is far more circular than a website with most of its pages located at site.com/here/begins/the/longest/URL/in/the/world.
BEST PRACTICES

✴ When making links, instead of using text such as “click here” and “learn more,” use descriptive text e.g. “Learn more about X” and/or ARIA labels. (Read more about ARIA labels on opposite page.) Identify downloads e.g. “Download PDF” rather than simply including a blind link.

✴ Only use headings if you are going to nest them properly. If you simply want the style of a heading class, create a new CSS class to achieve that.

✴ Always use semantic formatting. Use tags such as `<cite>` and `<em>` instead of `<i>` (and avoid `<b>`, `<i>`, and `<u>` tags).

✴ Group similar items together. For example, if you have an image and some text that both lead to the same destination, apply one `<a href>` tag to both.

✴ Split different items apart. Avoid the infinite scroll that comes with a long page and make a set of related short pages.

✴ Keep menu item names short and recognizable. Titles like “About,” “Programs,” and “Where” are answers to users’ questions or immediate needs.

PDF GUIDANCE

PDFs are popular on academic websites, but there is a time and place to use them. In general, PDFs should only be used for items that need to be downloaded and shared, e.g. course syllabi. PDFs can also be used for archival or governance content that has a limited audience. All PDFs must be properly configured for accessibility. If you’re not sure, use the PAVE Accessibility Tool (http://www.pave-pdf.org/index.en.html).
ARIA GUIDANCE
WHAT ARE ARIA LABELS?

ARIA stands for Accessible Rich Internet Applications. There are three types of labels that can be added to most HTML elements.

**aria-label**: to add information when no text — or no text that makes sense read aloud — is displayed. For example, an “X” used as a close button doesn’t make sense read aloud, so aria-label=”close window” is adding to the tag. For example, “read more” as a link doesn’t give much information, so the link should read `<a href="http://link.com" aria-labelledby="read more about the college">`.

**aria-labelledby**: to incorporate a related item into the accessibility tree. This tag’s value overrides all others.

**aria-describedby**: to add accessible descriptions to an element. This label uses id selectors to link parts of a page together. For example, if a form asks for information and is accompanied by a paragraph describing how the information will be used, this tag uses the same description in both the element and its description’s id tag.

See below for sample code.

As a web editor, you are most likely to use the aria-label tag.

BEST PRACTICES

» The aria-label attribute is used to define a string that labels the current element. Use it in cases where a text label is not visible on the screen. If there is visible text labeling the element, use aria-labelledby instead.

» Don’t replicate semantics through ARIA. For example, it’s already understood that `<a href>` will be a link, so there is no need to define role=“link”. Similarly, don’t change native semantics through ARIA.

» Don’t use ARIA if it’s not necessary. Bad ARIA is worse than no ARIA.
ACCESSIBILITY CHECKLIST

1. Check the heading structure on the page. Remember that screen readers will follow the DOM structure of the page, not the visual display. Don’t use <Hx> tags to style content.

2. Mark items like captions, blockquotes, and footnotes with an appropriate tag.

3. Use semantic formatting, e.g. <nav>, <blockquote>, <dl>, <em>, and <cite>.

4. Change poor link text e.g. “click here” to be descriptive. (In fact, don’t use the word “click” at all.) Add aria-label only if the linked text doesn’t make a lot of sense when read aloud. For example, a link that reads “Scholarship Application” doesn’t intuitively mean “Download application,” so that should be the aria-label value.

5. Limit link text to 100 characters (shorter is better).

6. Check for empty links and headings.

7. GET RID OF ALL CAPS. See, isn’t that much better? If you must have all caps, use style=“text-transform:uppercase”

8. Get rid of em dashes, ampersands, and other special characters where not absolutely needed. (Swap out asterisks for something explanatory, like “Note.”)

9. Add alternative text attributes to images. Leave blank if decorative, or add descriptive text if needed e.g. for charts, graphs, or where adding information would enhance the content. If the image is a link, the alt attribute will provide the link text. If the image is grouped with a text link, the alt attribute should be empty.

10. When building in-page navigation, use appropriate ARIA labels to connect related elements, use phrases such as “Jump down to,” and remove any “|” characters dividing the nav links.

11. Change directional text to be cross-referential, e.g. change “Choose from the links at left” to “Choose from links in section titled ‘Resources’”

12. Check all PDFs for accessibility.

13. Use the available grid layouts for content presented via an HTML table, or add role=“presentation” to the <table> tag.

14. If something would be confusing to a screen reader user and you don’t have one of the above ways to fix it, use aria-hidden=“true”.
CONTENT CLEANUP CHECKLIST

1. Retain only body text from pages coded in pure HTML, and remove any divs or custom classes. For pages and posts already in a CMS, remove divs and custom classes.

2. Know your destination for each piece of content, i.e. landing page, post, page, event, widget.

3. Know what, if any, categorization schemes you need. For example, if you know you’d like to eventually have a list of books, categorize all relevant posts as “Books.”

4. When entering content into a CMS, use the Parent function for pages to establish a page hierarchy, and categorize posts according to the list you’ve devised. However, avoid creating top-level pages simply to organize content; use them as landing pages or pseudo-organize them using a Custom Link with value “#” in the menu.

5. Categorize potentially outdated or out-of-place content as such or make a note in the site audit report.

6. Remove or edit internal links. If the content to which you need a link isn’t yet uploaded, leave yourself a <!-- text comment --> to add it later.

7. When adding an item to the Media Library, give it a meaningful title and note its intended use in the description.

8. Check for redundancy. Look for headings with the same or similar content. Remove in-page menus and create sidebar menus instead.

9. Check for spelling and grammar mistakes. Break up long chunks of text into shorter ones.

10. Check for book, movie, and TV titles and use the <cite> tag.
ENSURING ACCESSIBILITY THROUGH DESIGN

Much of the heavy lifting in design will be done by the time you’re handed keys to your site. However, you’ll have some decisions to make that influence the user experience (UX).

PAGE NAVIGATION AND FLOW

- Consider how elements will be introduced to those who are using a screen reader.
- Use ARIA labels to identify subparts of your main content, especially if it contains both rich media and article.
- Use ample white space and use headings and horizontal rules to break up text. You may also use decorative images to separate portions of the page (these images do not require alternative text).

BEST PRACTICES

- When ordering your menu items, don’t assume that any user will follow that order. Rather, place the most important items in the middle of the menu; users’ eyes are drawn to the middle of a page first.
- That said, keep in mind the tabbing order of your page and be mindful of the order in which elements will be read in a screenreader. Limit sidebars and don’t attempt to create a sidebar within an article. Rather, let the WordPress theme handle the display of sidebars.
- Don’t use pictures of or including text. If you must do so, include alternative text (available in WordPress’s image editor or, in Text view, the alt="" attribute of the img tag) that “reads” the text to the screen reader (see opposing page for more information).
ALTERNATIVE TEXT

You should always use the alt="" tag when adding images, but you don’t always have to fill in the blank. If the image is decorative, adding alternative text to it will cause confusion for the user. You’ll need to fill in alternative text if the image contains crucial information (e.g. a chart or graph) or serves a function on the page (e.g. as a menu or button).

MAKE IT DESCRIPTIVE IF THE IMAGE IS DESCRIPTIVE

A search button uses an image of a magnifying glass. The alternative text is “search” and not “magnifying glass”.

A picture shows how a knot is tied including arrows showing how the ropes go to make the knot. The text alternative describes how to tie the knot, not what the picture looks like.

A chart showing sales for October has an short alternative text of “October sales chart”. It also has a long description that provides all of the information on the chart.

A heading contains a picture of the words, “UF College of Liberal Arts and Sciences” in stylized text. The alt text for the picture is “UF College of Liberal Arts and Sciences”

MAKE IT INTERESTING AND EFFICIENT

Instead of alternative text such as “photo of students,” try rich descriptions such as “photo of excited students holding books and backpacks and mingling among lush gardens.”

Make alternative text information-rich. For example, if displaying a map showing the distribution of palm trees on the UF campus, rather than writing, “map of palm trees on campus,” try, “map of palm trees on the Florida campus showing that the largest cluster of palms is at Lake Alice.”

TABLE GUIDANCE

Tables are meant to present data in columns and rows. If you’d like to present images or some other type of content in columns and rows, you can use one of the layouts available in the Wordpress theme. If you absolutely must use a table for layout, add role="presentation" to your <table> tag. This tells assistive devices that the table contains content that is not data.
WEBSITE REVITALIZATION

GETTING STARTED

NEED A NEW SITE?

Department and Organization Webmasters: If you don’t have a subdomain name, please request from CLAS IT. They will create a subdomain with your department’s name or a major keyword. Subdomains may be third-level, e.g. ufdept.ufl.edu, or fourth-level, e.g. studentgroup.ufdept.ufl.edu.

Faculty and Staff: You can get a subdirectory at your department’s website in which Wordpress will be installed, for example, ufdept.ufl.edu/janesmith.

NAMES

The names used in your site’s subdomain or subdirectory will create the URL, or address, of your website. Note that there are some restrictions for these names:

http://www.it.ufl.edu/policies/web-related/domain-name/

CONTENT AUDIT AND REJUVENATION

IS YOUR WEBSITE READY FOR TODAY’S AUDIENCE?

Department and Organization Webmasters: Think about your audience. Who do you want to come to the site and what do you want them to get out of it? We’ll audit your content for out-of-date material that drags down your site and help you develop a fresh new approach.

Faculty and Staff: Your UF profile is one of the first things students and colleagues will find when they search your name. Make sure it’s up-to-date!

IDENTITY

All sites hosted on UF servers must comply with UF branding. If you’re in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, you have a ready-made, customizable Wordpress theme at your disposal.

http://identity.ufl.edu/web/

DIGITAL PRESENCE DEVELOPMENT

ARE YOU GETTING THE WORD OUT?

Department and Organization Webmasters: Your most powerful advertising tool is word of mouth, and these days, it happens on social media. We’ll help you develop a consistent, engaging digital presence.

IDENTITY

All official UF social media accounts must comply with UF policies. If you’re in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, you have branding materials and the expertise of the Communications Office to assist you with this process.

http://identity.ufl.edu/social-media/
**POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

**POLICIES**

1. All sites must be hosted on CLAS IT’s server and use Wordpress as the CMS.
2. All sites will use our custom Wordpress theme. We do not provide web design services and we will not use any other Wordpress theme.
3. We do not provide training services. Please see available tutorials at comms.clas.ufl.edu/tutorials

**CONTENT AUDIT AND TRANSFER**

1. We will begin the content audit process. This involves tasks such as identifying out-of-date posts, events, and photos, broken links, and accessibility issues.

2. We will meet with you to discuss the audit results. At this stage, we’ll discuss any content revisions or additions you may want. You will need to provide new content; we are not able to assist with copywriting. We will also discuss what components you would like and how we can customize our theme to suit your aesthetic and audience.

3a. If the content audit requires any formatting or style changes, we can assist with those. We will make changes needed for accessibility standards at our discretion. If the site is already in Wordpress, this process is greatly streamlined. For HTML sites, content must be handled carefully to work in the content management system (CMS). This may involved stripping HTML from body copy, coding a custom CSS stylesheet, and editing for accessibility.

3b. We will reorganize the site hierarchy/sitemap if necessary.

*Step 3 typically takes 5-7 business days. If your site has “subsites,” i.e. distinct divisions of your main site, allow 5-7 business days per subsite.*

4a. For sites currently in Wordpress: Each site will be exported from its current installation and put into a test Wordpress site with the new UFCLAS theme (see examples here). New header images, social media integration, and other rich content may be incorporated at this time. Menus and widgets will likely need to be modified for content changes and/or the aspects of the new theme.

4b. For sites currently in HTML: Content will be loaded into the CMS and organized according to the new sitemap if applicable. New header images, social media integration, and other rich content may be incorporated at this time.

*Step 4 typically takes 10-15 business days. If your site has “subsites,” i.e. distinct divisions of your main site, allow 10-15 business days per subsite.*

5a. For sites currently in Wordpress: Once you like how things are on the test site(s), the test site(s) will be exported and loaded with the new theme into your current site.
THE BASICS OF WORDPRESS

KEY TERMS

component: Any feature that’s not the core content in a website. Examples include slideshows, banners, and widgets.

content management system (CMS): Any software such as Wordpress that organizes large amounts of digital content, text, photos, and other media and displays it in a user-friendly way.

dashboard: The “back end” of any Wordpress site that allows one to enter and edit content and components. It’s typically accessible by adding “/wp-admin” after your site’s URL.

page: One of two types of content in Wordpress. Pages are static items that can be organized in a hierarchy. You can include text and images, as well as embedded audio and video, in page.

permalink: The address at which any content in Wordpress is available—what’s in the address bar at the top of your browser.

post: One of two types of content in Wordpress. Posts are dated items that can be organized by categories. You can include text and images, as well as embedded audio and video, in posts.

slideshow: A component in which images, sometimes with text, “slide” across the screen in a regular pattern.

theme: A set of design documents and components that control how content is displayed to the average user.

widget: A component that offers a function or information to users. Widgets are typically in the sidebar or footer of a website and may have internal (calendar of posts, tag cloud) or external (social media, third-party app) content.

BEST PRACTICES

Place static content (e.g. your CV, research interests, etc.) in Wordpress “pages.” Pages are more like traditional webpages, but can be organized alongside a blog, removing the need to set up a blog in addition to a static website. Pages are often used to build navigational menus to make your site easier to use. Pages have a hierarchy that you should use to reflect the sitemap. For example, pages devoted to the major, minor, and certificate offered by a department can be organized as “children” of a “parent” Academics page.

Place dated content (e.g. publication news, lecture dates) in Wordpress “posts.” Posts are more like the typical “blog” entries, but in addition to journaling, provide a flexible outlet to announce accomplishments, as well as events and other time-sensitive information.

An exception to the static vs. dated rule: Posts also can be used to store massive amounts of information that needs to be organized by Wordpress’ powerful CMS, which uses categories to filter and sort posts. The plugin List Category Posts then allows you to display posts according to whatever criteria you choose. **Categorize your posts** according to what your audience would want to learn from them and what keywords they would use to find them, and how you need to organize them. **Tip:** change the permalink structure in the Dashboard to remove the date from your posts’ URLs (browser address).

Good categories: Research, Classes, News, 2018

Bad categories: College, Papers, Gainesville
Everything you need is at your fingertips in the Dashboard. You can edit Posts and their Categories and Tags, upload and edit Media such as photos, add Forms to allow people to contact you, and add Pages and Slideshows. Under the Appearance menu, you can edit your Widgets and Menus. Note: our theme offers custom Sidebars. For a tutorial, visit https://comms.clas.ufl.edu/custom-sidebars-and-site-navigation/. Finally, under the Settings menu, you can change the name of your site, control how people interact with it, and change the permalink structure.

Add tags to your posts to help search engines index them. The best tags refer to topics that people around the web might use as keywords to arrive at your site or discuss your content. For example, if your research interests are American politics and African American history, you would use the tags, “politics, US, ‘American politics’, ‘African American’, and ‘history’, to name a few. Note how phrases are enclosed in quotes so that the words are not split apart.

PROMOTION AND SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

Consider your audience at both UF and beyond. Potential students, collaborators, donors, and other interested parties may be searching for or otherwise come across your web presence. You should keep the following in mind:

Search rankings: You’re not running a business on your website, but you are selling something: information, about you, your department, or your organization. Therefore, you want your website to come up near the top of results for any web search that a person would likely use to find you. One of the easiest ways to do this by using keywords (e.g. UF, research, archaeology, sea turtles) consistently in the titles and headings of your content.

Accessibility: Not only does this help users with a disability read your website, it can help improve your search rankings as well. Accessibility includes practices such as providing alternative text, using semantic formatting, and organizing your text and navigation in a simple fashion. Learn more about Accessibility on pages 3-9 of this guide.